

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

Please amend Claims 1, 2, and 5 by substituting the following:

1. (Twice amended) A process apparatus including an airtight process vessel, an exhaust system for exhausting gas from the process vessel, and a baffle plate for partitioning the process vessel into a process chamber for processing an object and an exhaust passage communicating with the exhaust system,

wherein the baffle plate includes a plurality of slits through which the process chamber and the exhaust passage communicate with each other,

wherein the inner surface of each slit is sloped at least along the slit length, said sloped surface being formed to having a depth not less than 1/4 of the thickness of the baffle plate,

wherein for each slit the opening facing the process chamber is larger than the opening facing the exhaust passage, and

wherein for each slit an angle θ formed between the sloped surface and an axis perpendicular to the openings of the slit falls within a range from 5° to 30° .

2. (Twice amended) The process apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the depth of the sloped surface is formed to not less than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate.

5. (Twice amended)

A process apparatus including an airtight process vessel, an exhaust system for exhausting gas from the process vessel, and a baffle plate for partitioning the process vessel into a process chamber for processing an object and an exhaust passage communicating with the exhaust system,

wherein the baffle plate includes a plurality of slits through which the process chamber and the exhaust passage communicate with each other,

wherein each slit includes an exhaust-passage opening facing the exhaust passage and a process-chamber opening facing the process chamber,

wherein at least one side of said process-chamber opening includes a sloped inner surface at least along the slit length, said sloped inner surface of the process-chamber opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate, and

wherein at least one side of said exhaust-passage opening includes an inner surface that is substantially perpendicular to the surface of the baffle plate, said inner surface of the exhaust-passage opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate.

Please add the following new Claims 14-26:

14. (New) A baffle plate for partitioning a process vessel into a process chamber for processing an object and an exhaust passage communicating with the exhaust system, said baffle plate including a plurality of slits through which the process chamber and the exhaust passage communicate with each other,

wherein the inner surface of each slit is sloped at least along the slit length, said sloped surface being formed to having a depth not less than 1/4 of the thickness of the baffle plate,
wherein for each slit the opening facing the process chamber is larger than the opening facing the exhaust passage, and

wherein for each slit an angle θ formed between the sloped surface and an axis perpendicular to the openings of the slit falls within a range from 5° to 30° .

15. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 14, wherein the depth of the sloped surface is formed to not less than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate.

16. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 15, wherein the baffle plate is shaped like a ring, and the plurality of slits are arranged radially on an entire circumferential surface of the baffle plate.

17. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 14, wherein each slit extends in a radial direction of the baffle plate.

18. (New) A baffle plate for partitioning a process vessel into a process chamber for processing an object and an exhaust passage communicating with the exhaust system, said baffle plate including a plurality of slits through which the process chamber and the exhaust passage communicate with each other,

wherein each slit includes an exhaust-passage opening facing the exhaust passage and a process-chamber opening facing the process chamber,

wherein at least one side of said process-chamber opening includes a sloped inner surface at least along the slit length, said sloped inner surface of the process-chamber opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate, and

wherein at least one side of said exhaust-passage opening includes an inner surface that is substantially perpendicular to the surface of the baffle plate, said inner surface of the exhaust-passage opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate.

19. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 18, wherein the inner sloped surface of the process-chamber opening and the inner surface of the exhaust-passage opening are formed to having depths not less than 1/4 of the thickness of the baffle plate.

20. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 18, wherein the baffle plate is shaped like a ring, and the plurality of slits are arranged radially on an entire circumferential surface of the baffle plate.

21. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 18, wherein each slit extends in a radial direction of the baffle plate, and the inner sloped surface of the process-chamber opening slopes from an opening rim of the slit, which faces the process chamber, toward the exhaust passage in which direction the opening of the slit is narrowed.

22. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 21, wherein the exhaust-passage opening and the process-chamber opening communicate with each other through a passage having a diameter which is not larger than the minimum diameter of the process-chamber opening that is surrounded by an inner rim of the sloped surface.

23. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 18, wherein for each slit an angle θ formed between the sloped surface and an axis perpendicular to the openings of the slit falls within a range from 5° to 30° .

24. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 18, wherein the width W1 of the process-chamber opening and the width W2 of the exhaust-passage opening are set as to satisfy a condition of $1 \leq W2/W1 \leq 1.4$.

25. (New) The baffle plate of claim 14, wherein the sloped surface of each slit is smooth.

26. (New) The baffle plate of claim 18, wherein the sloped inner surface of said process-chamber opening is smooth.